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## **NORTH DAKOTA CONSUMERS CAN GET “SOMETHING FOR NOTHING”**

BISMARCK – Starting tomorrow, North Dakota consumers will be able to get a free credit report from all three major credit reporting agencies.

Until now, consumers were entitled to a free credit report only after being turned down for credit. Under a federal law enacted last year, consumers are entitled to one free credit report each year from Experian, TransUnion and Equifax. The law, which is being rolled out in stages across the nation, takes effect in North Dakota on March 1<sup>st</sup>.

The free credit reports for North Dakota consumers are timely. ChoicePoint, one of the nation's largest “data collection” companies, recently revealed personal and financial information of over 100,000 consumers nationwide, including 137 North Dakotans, had been stolen, putting those individuals at risk for identity theft.

“A credit report is the first line of defense against identity theft,” said Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. “I urge everyone to take advantage of the free credit reports and review the information in the report to make sure it is accurate. If there is any suspicious activity, be sure to notify the credit bureau immediately,” he continued.

The federal law allows a consumer to receive one free credit report from each of the three reporting agencies each year. A consumer may order a free report from each of the three companies at the same time or monitor their credit activity by ordering one from each company every four months. The three nationwide consumer reporting companies have set up a central location to order a free annual report. Consumers can order the free credit reports in one of three ways:

1. Online at: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com); or
2. Call 877-322-8228; or
3. Complete the Annual Credit Report Request Form found at [www.ftc.gov/credit](http://www.ftc.gov/credit) and mail it to: Annual Credit Report Request Service, PO Box 105281, Atlanta, GA 30348-5281.

The credit bureaus may try to sell additional in-depth credit information and services when a consumer requests the free report, but the consumer does not have to purchase any of the additional services.

“As soon as the law takes effect in North Dakota, consumers are likely to receive solicitations by e.mail, mail and telephone offering assistance in obtaining the free credit reports,” said Stenehjem. “However, the only legitimate way to get a free credit report is to request one directly from the Annual Credit Report location,” he cautioned.

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